

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 IO-12 DPW-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

USIA-12 EUR-25 RSR-01 /120 W
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P 281020 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 909

INFO USDEL FPJMT PRIORITY

USDEL JEC PARIS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 7421

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT MOPS VS

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH CHIEF OF RVNDEL TO TPJMC

1. LTG THUAN, CHIEF OF RVN DELEGATION TO TWO- PARTY JOINT MILITARY COMMISSION, APRIL 28 MET WITH EMBOFFS FOR ONE HOUR OF FREE- WHEELING DISCUSSION OF TWO- PARTY AND OTHER MATTERS. KEY POINTS FOLLOW:

2. CIVILIAN DETAINEE RELEASE SHCHEDULED FOR APRIL 27 AT LOC NINH WAS NOT POSSIBLE DUE TO INABILITY OF ICCS TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS IN TIME, WHICH IN TURN WAS DUE TO FAILURE OF PRG TO COMMUNICATE NOTIFICATION OF GUARANTEES OF SAFETY TO ICCS UNTIL EVENING OF APRIL 27.

ADVANCE PARTY FINALIZING ARRANGEMENTS AT LOC NINH APRIL 27 RAN INTO FLAP WHEN LOCAL COMMUNIST AUTHORITIES, APPARENTLY WITHOUT INSTRUCTIONS

FROM PRG/ SAIGON, TEMPORARILY DETAINED VNAF PILOTS OF JMC CHOPPERS. PILOTS RELEASED AT 1400 AND AIRCRAFT RETURNED WITHOUT FURTHER INCIDENT.

3. THUAN WAS HOPEFUL THAT RELEASE OF 200 RVN AND 63 PRG DETAINEES WOULD GO OFF ON SCHEDULE APRIL 28. HE DID NOT EXPECT, HOWEVER, CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT PRG WOULD BE TURNING OVER ANY DETAINEES OF NOTE: OF LIST OF 63 DUE TO BE HANDED OVER AT LOC NINH, 15 ARE ARVN DESERTERS AND REMAINDER ARE ORDINARY CIVILIANS. NO FORMER RVN CADRE ARE INCLUDED. THUAN VOLUNTEERED OPINION THAT MANY OF THESE, IF NOT ALL, HAD BEEN KILLED. ASND CALLED THE SUBJECT TO HIS ATTENTION. LAC AGREED TO CHECK IMMEDIATELY WITH VNAF.

3. AT 3:00 P. M. APRIL 27 THE CANDEL TO ICCS REGION VII, THIS WEEK' S CHAIRMAN, TOLD THE CONSULATE GENERAL THAT CANADIAN OFFICERS IN VI THANH HAD SEEN THE ICCS- MARKED HELICOPTER APRIL 26 AND NOTED IT WAS ARMED WITH MACHINE GUNS AND ROCKET PODS. IN A REGION VII PLENARY SESSION APRIL 27, THE HUNGARIAN DELEGATE TOLD THE CANADIAN CHAIRMAN THAT THEY TOO HAD SEEN HELICOPTERS WITH ICCS MARKINGS PARKED AT CAN THO AIRFIELD. THE HUNGARIANS ASKED THE CANDIAN CHAIRMAN TO PROTEST THIS FACT TO THE VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES AND THE TPJMC. THE CANADIAN DELEGATE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER THE POLISH AND HUNGARIAN TEAMS AT THE VI THANH SUB- SITE HAD SEEN THE HELICOPTER FLYING COMBAT MISSIONS ON APRIL 26. HE TOLD THE HUNGARIANS HE WOULD CONSIDER A PROTEST.

4. LAC MET WITH THE CONSULATE GENERAL OFFICER LATER IN THE AFTERNOON OF APRIL 27. LAC REPORTED THE AMERICAN MILITARY HAD TURNED OVER TO VNAF PRIOR TO THEIR DEPARTURE HELICOPTERS THE AMERICANS HAD USED TO CARRY ICCS. THESE HELICOPTERS CARRIED ICCS MARKINGS. AFTER RECEIVING THEM, VNAF FAILED TO COMPLETELY REPAINT THE ICCS- MARKED CRAFT.

UNTIL 26, LAC CLAIMED, THE VNAF HAD NOT USED THE HELICOPTERS. THAT DAY A VNAF CHOPPER CRASHED IN CHUONG THIEN AND AS AN " EMERGENCY

MEASURE" VNAF BROUGHT ONE OF THE MARKED HELICOPTERS INTO SERVICE. THE VNAF COMMANDER IS MOST EMBARRASED AND HAS GIVEN INSTRUCTIONS TO HIS MEN TO THOROUGHLY REPAINT EACH ICCS- MARKED HELICOPTER. THE VNAF COMMANDER PRETENDED THAT ICCS MARKINGS WERE CARRIED ONLY ON THE UNDERBELLY OF THE CHOPPERS. HE ALSO REPORTED THAT HE FEARED THE POLISH AND HUNGARIANS IN VI THANH HAD PHOTOGRAPHED THE HELICOPTER, MACHINE GUNS, ROCKET PODS, ICCS MARKINGS, AND ALL. CONFIDENTIAL

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5. LAC REPORTED HE EXPLAINED THE " MISTAKE" TO THE CANDEL AND ASKED HIM TO PUT THE BEST FACE ON THE INCIDENT POSSIBLE.

6. THE VNAF COMMANDER' S CLAIM THAT THE HELICOPTERS WERE PARTIALLY PAINTED IS NOT TRUE. BOTH ICCS PERSONNEL AND MEMBERS OF THE CONSULATE

GENERAL STAFF SAW THE HELICOPTERS; FURTHERMORE, LAC'S CONTENTION THEY HAVE NOT BEEN USED SINCE THE AMERICAN MILITARY LEFT IS ALSO NOT FACTUAL. ONE SUCH HELICOPTER WAS RECENTLY SEEN IN VINH LONG.

7. COMMENT: PAINT BRUSHES ARE WHIRLING AT CAN THO AIRFIELD AS MR IV TRIES TO COVER UP ITS ERROR. IT WOULD BE UNFORTUNATE IF MR IV OR VNAF HAD TRIED INTENTIONALLY TO ABUSE ICCS MARKINGS. WITH THE LAO BAO INCIDENT STILL VERY MUCH IN THE LIMELIGHT, THE POLES, HUNGARIANS, AND PRG COULD USE VNAF'S STUPIDITY TO GOOD EFFECT. BARNES UNQUOTE
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ACTION EA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 910
INFO USDEL FPJMT PRIORITY
USDEL JEC PARIS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SAIGON 7421

MAJOR CEASE-FIRE VIOLATION. AMB GAUVIN OF THE ICCS, WHO MET WITH THUAN APRIL 27, REPORTEDLY TOLD THE GENERAL THAT HE WAS READY TO SEND HIS PEOPLE TO TLC BUT THAT "THE OTHER SIDE" DID NOT AGREE. THUAN COMMENTED THAT ONLY B-52 STRIKES COULD FORCE THE BESEIGING FORCES TO WITHDRAW.

10. THUAN EXPECTS A GENERAL COMMUNIST OFFENSIVE IN MAY, TO CONCENTRATE IN FOUR AREAS: NORTHERN MR 1, THE KONTUM-DAK TO AREA OF MR II, QUANG NGAI AND NORTHERN BINH DINH, CENTERING ON SA HUYNH, AND NORTHERN PARTS OF MR III (TAY NINH, BINH LONG, AND PHUOC LONG). HE CITED A BUILDUP OF 200,000 TROOPS, AND GENERAL REINFORCEMENT IN BORDER AREAS OF LAOS AND CAMBODIA, AS INDICATIONS OF EARLY OFFENSIVE. EMBOFF REMINDED GENERAL TUAN OF RECENT SERIOUS EXPRESSIONS OF USG CONCERN ABOUT CEASE-FIRE VIOLATIONS AND OUR DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS TO SEEK TO CAUSE VC

AND NVA TO MODIFY THEIR OBJECTIVES IN RVN. THUAN ALSO EXPRESSED SERIOUS CONCERN RE SITUATION IN CAMBODIA.

11. THUAN'S SUMMARY OF THIS WEEK'S TWO MEETINGS WAS NOT PARTICULARLY ENCOURAGING. NO PROGRESS WAS MADE ON MILITARY POWS, CEASE-FIRE ENFORCEMENT, OR DEPLOYMENT IN MEETING OF CHIEFS (ALTHOUGH EMBASSY NOTES THAT SOME FORWARD MOVEMENT OF PROCEDURAL MATTERS DID OCCUR IN SUBCOMMISSIONS). EVEN ON
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CIVILIAN DETAINEES, KED ABOUT LIST OF 1250 WHICH RVN HAS OFFERED TO RETURN, THUAN INDICATED THAT FIRST 750 WOULD INCLUDE VARIOUS CATEGORIES OF LOW-LEVEL VC CADRE, BUT COULD OFFER NO INFORMATION ABOUT PLANS FOR RELEASES OF HIGHER-LEVEL PERSONNEL, INCLUDING POLITICAL PERSONALITIES. RVN HAS YET TO RECEIVE LIST OF ALL 637 SLATED FOR RELEASE BY PRG, BUT FIRST LIST OF 125 (NOT INCLUDING 63 AT LOC NINH) INCLUDED 7 MILITARY DESERTERS, THE REST BEING ORDINARY CIVILIANS.

4. THUAN INDICATED THAT GVN POSITION REMAINS FIRM AND UNCOMPROMISING ON MATTER OF 410 MILITARY POWS WHICH PRG ADMITS HOLDING: THEY MUST BE RETURNED UNCONDITIONALLY, WITHOUT REFERENCE TO ANY OTHER ISSUE. DESPITE AT LEAST ONE REPORT RECEIVED BY THE EMBASSY OF A POSSIBLE BREAKTHROUGH, THUAN SAID THAT NO RECENT PROGRESS HAD BEEN
MADE ON THIS ISSUE.

5. THERE WAS ALSO DISCUSSION IN THE POW SUBCOMMISSION ON APRIL 23 OF A POSSIBLE REQUEST TO THE CANADIAN AND HUNGARIAN RED CROSS TO VISIT THE 410 DETAINED ARVN POWS. ASKED ABOUT PROGRESS ON THIS ISSUE, THUAN NOTED THAT RVN DEL HAD RAISED IT IN APRIL 24 MEETING OF CHIEFS BUT THAT PRG DID NOT RESPOND, NOT HAS THERE BEEN PROGRESS BY THE CHIEFS ON THE MATTER SINCE.

6. EMBOFF SUGGESTED THAT IT MIGHT BE USEFUL FOR GVN TO INVITE ICRC, WHOSE REPRESENTATIVE IS STILL IN SAIGON, TO CONTINUE VISITS TO POWS STILL HELD BY GVN. BY DOING SO, IT WAS NOTED, GVN COULD FORESTALL ANY POSSIBLE CHARGES OF MISTREATMENT. THUAN DID NOT ADDRESS THIS POINT DIRECTLY, BUT LATER SENT AN AIDE TO PURSUE THIS SUGGESTION.

7. GENERAL THUAN PROVIDED RUNDOWN OF PRESENT STATUS OF PRESENT AND FORMER POWS STILL HELD BY GVN. OF THE 241 WHOSE RETURN THE PRG CONTINUES TO DEMAND, 238 ARE NOW CONSIDERED HOI CHANH OR, IN THE NEW GVN FORMULATION, "FREEDOM-SEEKERS" (NGUOI TIM TU DO). THAT INCLUDES THE 210 WHO RALLIED AT BIEN HOA AND ANOTHER 28 WHO DECLINED TO RETURN TO THE COMMUNIST DURING PHASES 1-4.
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THE OTHER THREE ARE IN HOSPITAL AND WILL BE RELEASED TO PRG AS SOON AS HEALTH PERMITS. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THERE ARE ALSO 87 ENEMY POWS STILL HELD IN GVN PRISONS; THESE, THUAN SAID ARE SERVING OUT CRIMINAL SENTENCES AND THEIR STATUS WILL BE REVIEWED ONCE THEIR SENTENCES ARE COMPLETED. EMBOFF AT THIS POINT NOTED US CONCERN ON THIS POINT, AND NOTED THAT, WHILE THE GENEVA CONVENTION OF 1949 PERMITTED THE RVN TO HOLD CONVICTED POWS, THAT HAS BEEN SUPERSEDED BY THE PARIS AGREEMENT OF VIETNAM REQUIRING THAT ALL SUCH MILITARY POWS BE RETURNED. THUAN WAS NOT FAMILIAR WITH THE POINTS INVOLVED; EMBOFF PROMISED TO PROVIDE A MEMORANDUM TO CLARIFY THE ISSUE.

8. THUAN EXPANDED ON STATEMENTS HE MADE IN APRIL 27 PRESS CONFERENCE ABOUT ARVN POW HELD BY COMMUNISTS, WHICH HE CLAIMED TOTAL MORE THAN 25,000 IN AT LEAST 189 CAMPS. THE PRG DENIED HOLDING ANY ARVN OFFICERS BUT, THUAN SAID, 60 OFFICERS UP TO RANK OF COLONEL CAPTURED IN 1971 ARE BEING HELD AT LAM SON CAMP NEAR THE DRV- PRC BORDER. THEIR NAMES HAVE BEEN CONFIRMED BY MONITORING DRV BROADCASTS; INFORMATION ON THE CAMPS COMES FROM DEBRIEFING OF RETURNED ARVN POW.

9. ASKED ABOUT TONG LE CHAN, WHICH HAS BEEN OUT OF THE NEWS LATELY, THUAN PROFESSED SERIOUS CONCERN ABOUT THE STILL- BESEIGED CAMP. IT IS DIRECTLY CONFRONTED BY A TWO- DIVISION FORCE, PLUS A REGIMENT IN SUPPORT, AND THE CONTINUED SHELLING HAS CAUSED DETERIOR- ATION IN MORALE. THE SITUATION THERE IS NOT CRITICAL NOW; BUT, ON THE OTHER HAND, IT WOULD TAKE TWO DIVISIONS TO RELIEVE IT, AND THERE ARE NO GVN PLANS TO DO SO NOW SINCE THAT WOULD CONSTITUTE A

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